

**Major General Monro leaves the Headquarters to go back to UK where he will retire from the Army in March next year. He was the first international staff member to join the newly established Command in Solbiate Olona. Let's discover his thoughts.**

**Q. Sir, you are leaving the Army after serving for more than 30 years, how much did this environment change?**

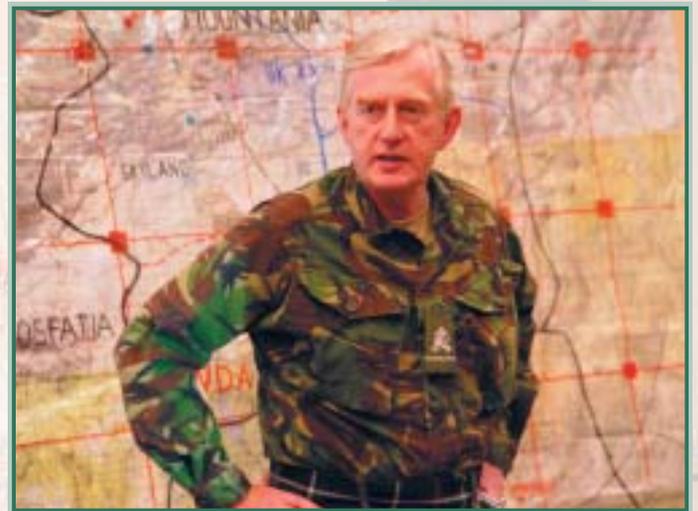
- A. It is changed a lot. When I joined the Army we were still in the middle the Cold War, but the Wall came down in the early '90s and since then NATO has enlarged and many old enemies, old foes are now on the same side. Now our main concerns are with the asymmetric threats around the world, in particular terrorism, so the scenario has changed considerably. I think also the way we do business has changed. In those early days we were to a degree "gifted amateurs", but now we are much more professional, we're much better resourced, with better equipment and we do a lot more together with other nations; that has all changed significantly.

**Q. You had the privilege to serve in many countries and to work within NATO, what do you see as the biggest challenge for the military structure nowadays?**

- A. I think it is to make sure that we can do our job: that we are deployable, very usable and a very credible deterrent, a very credible force whenever we are deployed. In the past I think we had too many static forces, too much of our armies, navies and air forces were in static headquarters or in formations and units not able to deploy. We have got to be able to deploy and to be usable.

**Q. Now let us talk about NRDC-IT. You saw this HQ since the very beginning. What are the challenges for its future and what has not been achieved yet?**

- A. The challenges really are to improve what we have done so far, to make us more deployable, to make us more ready, and to make us more credible in what-



*MG Monro during Ex Sharp Dagger 03*

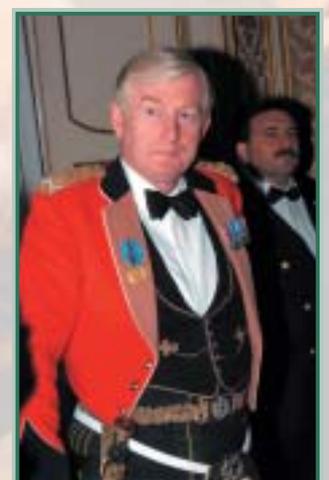
ver theatre of operations we are asked to go to. I think internally we need to work on our military culture, our mission command and our better coordination across the branches and passage of information, because we still do not, in my view, work as a team all the time. We need to work better together, as we know from football or rugby - whatever it might be, the better one works as a team the stronger and more likely you are to win; that is what we need to work on.

**Q. What is, in your opinion, the fundamental requirement that has to be met?**

- A. Again it goes back to being deployable, we have got to be ready, at short notice, to deploy and we've got to be able to undertake a number of different missions, some of which we may never even have considered before. It has got to be innate professionalism and a mentality and an ability to do anything that may reasonably be asked of us, that's what is fundamental. This must be our ethos.

**Q. Do you see changes ahead in the NRDC-IT primary mission?**

- A. No I don't. I think it is a fairly general mission. In every command I have had in the past, and I know I am only the Deputy Commander here, I have always said to those under my command that we have a mission statement. But let's be clear we are soldiers, we might be



called on to do a number of things which we might not have expected to do. Therefore we should always be prepared to do what might be reasonably asked of us at any time.

**Q. Next year our HQs will be focused on the NATO Response Force (NRF). What are the implications from a military point of view?**

A. We need to continue to improve the headquarters, and we need to focus on working with subordinate formations and units and making them into a cohesive whole and also working with superior headquarters. We have done that on



exercises up until now where subordinate and superiors have been played by an exercise control, but now we have to learn to work with them for real.

Also we have to learn to work with other component commands: the maritime and the air component, which again we have only worked with on CPXs – with the exception of Ex NORTHERN LIGHT. We have got to be able to do it for real, because we might be asked to go on operations with all of them in the future.

**Q. Now that NATO is building up the NATO Response Force (NRF), do you believe that structures like High Readiness Forces (HRF) may be deployed in future?**

A. I think it is perfectly possible, it is all part of this being able to do whatever might be reasonably asked of us: we must be flexible. The HRF has got more capability than an NRF will have. I think it is likely that this headquarters, as an HRF could be deployed to operational sustainment missions or perhaps to another major peace support operation. I think the NRF will only be able to go on a smaller operation or to start off a bigger mission which of course could evolve into our HRF task. This goes back to flexibility; our part of the NRF is only a module of the bigger HRF and that gives us enormous flexibility - and that is what we must be able to back up with our professionalism and our quick reaction.

**Q. What will be the best memory of this headquarters that you will take back with you to the UK?**

A. I think it is always fascinating, interesting and challenging - and I like challenges - to be part of a new

project. So coming to Ugo Mara barracks where there was very little when I arrived and where there were no non-Italian officers or warrant officers, and then going through the process for achieving the Full Operational Capability and all the things we have developed since then; that has been fascinating and interesting: being part of this project.



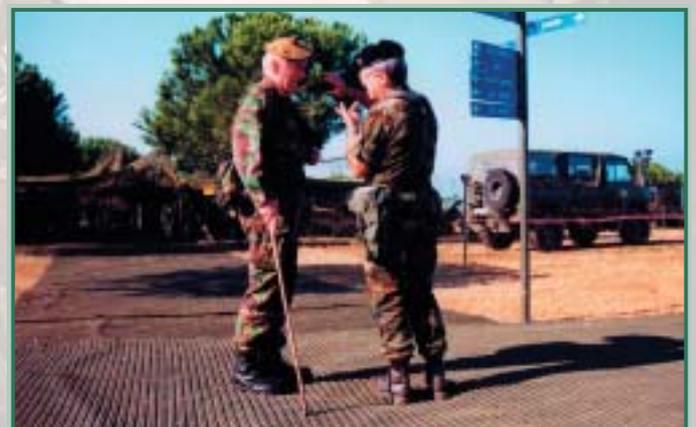
The second thing I will remember are all the friends I have made here.

**Q. What are your plans for the future?**

A. Well, I retire from the Army on the 1st March next year, so this is my last full military job. I am going to start a second career in Scotland. It won't be as long as my Army career, but I hope certainly to be working for the next 5-10 years in something that interests me but keeps me in Scotland.

**Q. Before closing our interview I want to ask you something more personal: Did you enjoy your stay in Italy and will you miss us?**

A. Yes of course. I enjoyed my stay in Italy; militarily it has been challenging and interesting. Off duty it has been fun to meet new people, to sample your food and wine, to travel around your country and to see a really beautiful part of the world - I have loved travelling around Italy with my wife and family. I shall miss that and I shall miss the friends I have made here and I look forward to coming back here with my family in the future for holidays.



MG Monro and Lt Gen Castagnetti during Ex Light Ship 02

